776 woman carries within her. (1) Deprived of Faro's essentially im-
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1. See G. Dieterlen, "Mécanisme de l'impureté chez les Dogon" /The Mechanism of Impurity Among the Dogon/ Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 82 ff.

pregnating power and contrary to its generating action, this blood is considered evil, and all that recalls it or comes near it is excluded from the ritual.

Faro's Character, Role, and Deed

776 The principal characteristics of Faro's deed in creation are: omnipotence, omnipresence, and benevolence. Everything, whether animate or inanimate, depends on him in time and space.

The Bambara are extremely sensitive to Faro's power over the universe. They say: "Neither by day nor by night does Faro stop his incessant work." He sees to the efficient workings of the order which he inaugurated and which requires constant attention. His time is divided: from dawn until evening he occupies himself with the earth and its inhabitants; the next twelve hours' work is devoted to aquatic animals and members of his own family. Procreation depends on his will; it is he who, in the sky and in the water, controls the physical and spiritual life of all beings: the soul and vital force. In due order, with which the humans cooperate by observing his laws, he maintains life and makes the new bodies participate in the functioning of the universe according to a regular rhythm. Souls are reincarnated, assuring the continuity of spiritual forces in the world. The same power directs all acts of individual and social life: birth, circumcision, excision, initiation, marriage, agricultural work, voyages, war or peace.

Throughout the development of individual life, it is Faro who maintains man's physical integrity: he gives him health, necessary to
F753 action. Sickness is always /53/ considered a loss of strength which the individual must ask Faro to restore. The sovereign master of man's life, he has the power to take it away from him.

825 village, I thought at first that here lay the reason for this rest, extraor-
787 dinary during the time of the most intensive hoeing. Not at all; the
[262] pagan Bambara were resting, and the women were giving their husbands and children dégé (millet flour mixed with milk and honey water) in obedience to a hyena's command. The hyena, it was said -- and all the sorcerers confirmed this -- had emerged from its dumbness, its tongue had been loosed, and it had predicted to the people of the west that a plague even more terrible than that of the caterpillars would descend on the country. Only one means to avert it remained: to refrain from going to the fields on Friday and to treat themselves to dégé, the food so dear to Moslems.

482 On my excursions I have often met men and women carrying
757 on their heads a gourd or a basket containing a handful of leaves or
824 some bundles of roots, and apart from the customary greetings it
784 has been impossible for me to get a word out of them. And why this silence? They were carrying a medicinal plant, a remedy which would lose all its virtue and all its efficacy if they conversed on the way, and they had to take care not to trample such-and-such a plant that grew on the edge of the path.

757 The Bambara quite readily names the plants and herbs whose
753 curative powers are known to him, and yet in the presence of a sick
784 person he will very seldom give you the name of the remedy the latter is taking, or the names of the roots and leaves that make up his poultices. Sickness, he believes is a force, a power which tortures our bodies. He is afraid that in naming the remedy he would provide this power with a weapon against its healing virtue, which is another force or power. He sets the second power against the first to make it leave.

811 It is evident that he attributes bits of reason and emotion to
784 everything, that he attributes human feelings to all that is animate and inanimate. The "taboos" are not merely one piece of evidence of this, they are an irrefutable proof of this attitude.

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Animals also have gnâma, and the gnâma of birds are among those most feared. By preference, they attack little children, who die in convulsions as a result; it is impossible to mistake the cause of their illness and death, since the hands and feet of the child curl up like a bird's claws. Birds are thought to be especially wicked in winter time, undoubtedly because they nest, find plenty of food, and are big, fat, and vigorous. During that season mothers tie around the necks of nursing infants a string that has nine knots in it, which places them under the protection of their gnâma. Birds keep their gnâma even when dead, and I remember that in November or December, 1907, all the village of Songhobougou attributed a small influenza epidemic to the death of a big black bird (the djougo), which a European killed in one of their fields. "We have pains in our kidneys, we have pains in our throats, and we cough," they said dismally, "and the hunter is to blame for it all. Toubabou ko té vva? A ye djougo do fa en ka forola, djougo gnâma do.... It is the European's fault, he killed a djougo in our fields and we are weighed down with gnâma." /29/

Chapter 2

Animism and Its Consequences

1. The Beliefs about Spirits

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The Bambara has not deified the forces of nature. Although in some instances he shows them respect and fears them, he leaves them without priest, /sacrificial/ victim, or altar; he is not a "nature worshipper" in the strict sense of the word; his true religion is animism. His spiritualism knows no bounds and he sees genii just about everywhere. The bush is full of these spirits; they lodge in the trees or lounge astride branches; they run around the outskirts of villages; splash in ponds and wells; they pull themselves onto high rocks,

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who operate in the depth of night," but by no means refers to nocturnal sorcerers. Moreover, in the eyes of the Negroes it designates not a bugaboo, but a reality.

themselves into hyenas in order to dig up corpses and eat them, and into gingin ("owl," "screech owl") to drink the blood of sleeping men and women. It is said that the blood of young girls has an especially exquisite taste, /39/ and when the souba are unable to enter a dwelling in material form to obtain it, they change themselves into such a rarefied breath that they go through the walls and roofs.

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All persons whose faces are disfigured with scars resulting from boils or canker sores are considered victims of a souba, as are those whose legs are rotted by syphilis; every person infected by erysipelas goes to the members of the Siri sect, the souba.

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In addition to the souba there are the gné-fla (1), men with

1, They are supposed to have the ability to make themselves invisible by means of grisgris hung on their belts. Deprived of these, they are powerless.

two eyes, with second sight, so called because they see the world of invisible beings and know the secret thoughts of men without having to undergo metamorphosis. Some of them are good and some evil; there are those who use their prerogatives to halt the blows of the souba and protect their fellows, and others who use them only to harm their neighbors. As the good as well as the evil can abuse their power, the Negroes keep them all together, and since the souba are almost always gné-fla as well, they are indiscriminately feared and hated.

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When a person is metamorphosed into something else he keeps his intelligence and his reason, but he is dominated by an instinct, either good or evil, which destroys his will and anesthetizes him.

Chapter 3

The Bambara's General Ideas on Human Life

1. Sickness

In his innermost being the Bambara feels an ever unassuaged thirst for happiness, an intense and pressing need to live for enjoyment; therefore he revolts against all suffering, both physical and mental. It seems unnatural to him, and at the least discomfort a person will state and believe that he is the victim of malice, of an enemy who is taking vengeance, and he immediately blames the world of invisible beings and those who have intimate relations with it.

Not only do the Bambara consider sickness unnatural, they consider it a more or less conscious force which comes to torture them. For fear of displeasing it or of displeasing the genie, the superior force which has taken it into its service and is using it as it pleases, they surround themselves with precautions against announcing the sickness of one of their people. When one asks a Negro for news of his health, his first answer will be that he is well, and if a member of his family is confined to his mat in agony, he will still tell you: "Toro si t'âla (1), he is suffering no pain."

1. Toro, "suffering"; si, "not any"; te, "is not"; â la, "on him" (la, "on").

The sick have unlimited confidence in their sorcerers, who are all doctors and apothecaries, and they submit blindly and without any argument to their orders and prescriptions. From them they receive herbs and leaves, and the infusions or brews made from these are prescribed as beverages or lotions, but most /45/ frequently the sorcerers rub their clients' bodies and gently stroke them, anoint them with oil and grease and spit on the affected part while reciting a formula. And always, of course, the number of grigris and talismans in the possession of the patient is increased by several items.

754 become detached and fall of their own accord "if they are well made
674 and have lost none of their complete power"; he also has a mass of antidotes. Almost always he escapes with nothing more than a few days on his mat and a good stomach-ache, and although his convalescence may be long and can sometimes go on indefintely, at least he is shown sympathy; he gets a big share in the sacrifices offered by his friends, and his broth improves.

754 If the korti are many and cannot be numbered -- "each fetish
278 has its own" -- the dounkono are still more numerous, for in addition to the fetishes, the sorcerers, elders, men, and women, all know how to prepare a poison and give it whatever strength and power is desired. Every poison produces a special disorder in the body depending on the hand that throws or pours it. When in doubt, the Bambara consult the being who never deceives and cannot be mistaken: the sorcerer! And it is usually he who prescribes the antidote.

754 In the eyes of the Bambara, pouring poison (dounkono di) or
673 throwing it (korti sou) is a blameworthy act, and those who are guilty of it have a dismal reputation among their fellows. One should not be surprised to see this crime remain unpunished, however, for in their eyes it does not bear the same odium as an overt or concealed murder by main force. I might even say, without fear of error, that this way of taking revenge is for them not a crime in the strict sense of the word. They so often have recourse to fetishes to settle a dispute and so readily threaten an enemy with the wrath of the gods, that taking vengeance through their intermediary leaves them calm and without any remorse. Besides, with what reproach should we reproach one who does so? It is true that he is cruel and without pity, /56/ but who gives power to the powder that he pours and the powder that he throws? It is the god, the fetish, and it alone is guilty! So let the enemy obtain the fetish's good graces and ward off its blows by sacrificing, let him set a more powerful god against it.

761 As one can see to the Bambara there is nothing natural about
●753 physical and mental suffering and death; there is always an intermediary, and suffering and death are caused by an enemy who is taking vengeance, by a wicked person, by a sorcerer, or by a fetish.

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1. To understand this belief of the Negro, read the chapter on sickness and death.

The most famous and terrible of all these invisible little beings of the bush, who are without official minister or priest but to whom many offerings nevertheless are made, is the wokolo. It is black as soot, with a skin like a monkey's, and no larger than an infant of one or two months. It likes to appear, and one can say that no Negro reaches thirty without having seen it. Although sometimes during the most severe heat or in the evening by the light of the moon, it runs along the banks of the river, throwing into the stream its tiny line, almost invisible and finer than a hair, it prefers the bush and the butter tree; the karité (Bassia parkii) is its prime favorite. With quiver slung over its shoulder and bow always strung, it lies in wait, and woe betide anyone who comes by and disturbs it. To defeat it and force it to beat a retreat, the one who comes upon it must greet it as soon as he sees it, but usually it is invisible and shoots him with its arrow, an arrow so small that he does not even feel it penetrate the flesh. It is this [753] arrow that causes the deep pussy abscesses (2) from which our Negroes

2. Like all superstitious and weak-minded people, the Negro believes that he has actually seen what are but imaginary dreams and wishes.

suffer.

Many of these invisible beings have no name. The least sociable are those that live in the false cedars, for to subdue them /87/ one must be a noumou (blacksmith), a koulé (digger of canoes, mender of gourds), etc. Only such persons dare to deal the first stroke of the ax to these trees and cut them down (1).

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1. Before doing so they recite a formula, and the first stroke of the ax is dealt by the chief of the blacksmiths, etc., or his deputy.